

Community Training and Assistance Center and the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools Leadership for Educator's Advanced Performance

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) is the 21st largest school district in the country. It has more than 9,000 teachers who serve almost 130,000 pre-K through 12th-grade students. The district serves a diverse population of students in its 162 schools. Due to high growth in the region, CMS expects a surge of 50,000 students, which will drive a demand for more than 16,000 new teachers in the next 10 years. Almost 70 percent of CMS' schools have been identified as high need, and 65 percent are struggling to reach academic targets for adequate yearly progress (AYP). These challenges motivated CMS to implement the Leadership for Educator's Advanced Performance (LEAP) initiative to create an alternative compensation system that links teachers' and principals' earnings to student achievement. The LEAP initiative will focus on instructional improvements, with recruitment and retention support for teachers in hard-to-staff subjects in high-need schools coupled with financial incentives for teachers and principals to have the maximum positive impact on student achievement.

Needs Assessment Results and General Information

The CMS student population—42 percent black, 36 percent white, 14 percent Hispanic, 4 percent Asian, and 4 percent Native American/multiracial—is divided among 167 schools; 110 of these schools are identified as high need. Free or reduced-price lunch rates at these high-need schools ranged from 30 to 99 percent in 2005-06. Teacher turnover averages 14 to 18 percent.

In total, 16 high-need schools will be participating in LEAP, beginning with six of the neediest schools in year 1 (one elementary school, one middle school, four high schools). By year 5, nearly 14,000 students and 1,300 teachers and principals will participate in the program. These first six schools are part of the district's Achieve-

ment Zone, which is made up of 10 schools with the highest needs and lowest performance that have been identified as low performing or priority schools by the state. The remaining four Achievement Zone schools will participate in LEAP in year 2.

All participating schools failed to meet their No Child Left Behind AYP targets for 2005-06, and the four participating high schools failed to meet the 60 percent passing threshold for the North Carolina End-of-Course Assessments. Teacher and principal turnover is worse at the targeted schools than is the state average. Teacher turnover was as high as 24 percent, and 75 percent of principals have fewer than 3 years of experience.

LOCATION(S)	Charlotte, North Carolina
GRANT AMOUNT	Year 2: \$2,906,012 5-year total: \$11,880,267
DURATION	5 years
PARTNERS	Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, Community Training and Assistance Center

Background

The LEAP initiative has four specific goals: (1) create a differentiated compensation model for teachers and principals that is based on increased student achievement and multiple classroom observations and other evaluations, (2) improve and support recruitment and retention efforts in hard-to-staff schools and subject areas, (3) align school support systems to build teacher and principal capacity for increasing student achievement, and (4) develop district capabilities to sustain and grow the performance-based compensation system.

CMS has already implemented some alternative compensation models, including school-based and classroom-based performance pay, signing bonuses, master teacher bonuses, and administrator merit pay. From these experiences, CMS has built a performance-based incentive system that uses the most successful features from previous programs coupled with the expertise and guidance of the Community Training and Assistance Center (CTAC) to create a comprehensive compensation system that results in higher student achievement and school performance.

Incentives

Eligible teachers and principals can earn a merit-based salary supplement of up to 10 percent annually for reaching the student academic achievement goals. They can also earn a bonus or stipend for attending professional development or assuming additional leadership responsibilities. Financial incentives include a \$10,000 signing bonus for teachers and principals who accept positions in hard-to-staff, high-need schools; \$8,000 signing bonuses for teachers who agree to teach hard-to-staff subjects; and incentive stipend pay of \$115/day, including benefits for attending approved professional development or assuming leadership roles and extra duties that are related to improving student achievement.

Evaluation

Stipends will be based largely on the successful implementation of the student learning objective process, adopted at the conclusion of Year 1 by the Steering Committee. Student learning objectives are created by individual teachers, with the approval of site-based administrators, and the support of the Curriculum and Instruction Department. Student attainment of the objectives will be measured by a combination of existing assessment instruments, and teacher designed tools. In addition, student achievement data will be collected from the North Carolina End-of-Grade (EOG) tests for grades 3 through 8 and the End-of-Course (EOC) tests for grades 9 through 12.

In addition, eligible administrators and teachers must earn Very Effective ratings on the Principal or Assistant Principal Appraisal Instruments, or At Standard or above ratings on all functions of the TPAI-R (Teacher Performance Appraisal Instrument-Revised), as applicable. The TPAI-R model requires at least three reviews per year on management of instructional time and student behavior; instructional presentation, monitoring, and feedback; and facilitating instruction, communication within the education environment, and performing non-instructional duties. CMS also employs the Downey 3-minute Walk-Through Model, which will also be used to monitor and guide teaching practices.

CMS and its partner, CTAC, will implement a revised and relevant professional development strategy for the LEAP Initiative schools that will be evaluated annually. Professional development will focus on the successful implementation of the student learning objective model.

Resources

CMS will reallocate funds from three existing pay-for-performance programs and has committed more than \$8.6 million over the 5-year period. By year 5, 75 percent of the differentiated compensation will be funded with local dollars.

Data Systems

Data management systems for student background and achievement data and for human resources information were recently updated at CMS; however the district has identified a need to improve data management systems and capacity to maximize efficiency and effectiveness of the LEAP system.

Year 1 Activities

Throughout the first year of the TIF-LEAP Initiative, the project partners have worked closely to formulate the details of and carry out Year 1 implementation of the grant, establish the design for project development and the pathway to Years 2-5, and plan for the long-term organizational and financial sustainability of the initiative.

Year 1 implementation concluded on schedule regarding stakeholder engagement and communication, spending, and overall project execution. This is reflected in the successful completion of activities such as the creation of formal Steering Committee and Working Group structures; engagement of key departments within the district, such as Accountability and Assessment, Communications, Curriculum and Instruction, Executive Office, Finance and Budget, Human Resources, and Information Technology; securing of stakeholder input through widely disseminated surveys and individual and focus group interviews; adoption of research-based student learning objective pathway for Years 2-5; creation of initial financial models leading

to the long-term organizational and financial sustainability of the initiative; creation of five-year Communication Plan and overall project control plan. The TIF-LEAP partners continue to be confident in the ultimate success of this initiative.

Additionally, there were a total of 46 recruitment bonuses paid to staff members hired at year one schools; 29 paid from FY08 and 17 paid from FY09 TIF funds. Out of approximately 344 year one staff, an estimated 65 teachers or 19% will receive the merit supplements.

Outlook for Year 2

The initiative is moving towards Years 2 – 5 by focusing increasingly on student growth and achievement measured at the classroom level, and building the capacity of the district to ensure long-term organizational and financial sustainability. Main challenges in Year 2 will include the support of the successful implementation of the student learning objective model; reformation of data management systems for students and teachers; systemic modification of the professional development and leadership development programs for teachers and administrators; creation of assumptions and modeling capacity for projecting long-term financial sustainability. In addition, CTAC will continue to conduct independent evaluation and assessment activities through surveys, interviews and the review of student achievement data and teacher profile data.